



Harris County
Public Health
Building a Healthy Community

HARRIS COUNTY PUBLIC HEALTH **STRATEGIC** **PLAN**

2023-2027



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LETTER FROM THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

Dear Colleagues,

Health equity is a fundamental human right. It means that everyone can access resources to support health and well-being, regardless of one's circumstances and where people live.

The social determinants of health (SDOH) are factors that affect health outcomes. Some examples include where someone lives, their employment status, their ability to access health care, education or community services, the safety of their neighborhoods and the built environment, and other conditions. The COVID-19 pandemic did not create the inequities in health but magnified health disparities and the need to strengthen our focus on addressing the SDOH.

Harris County Public Health (HCPH) is committed to ensuring that our community has equitable access to services, supports, and policies that promote health. We are renewing our focus on our mission of protecting health, preventing disease and injury, and promoting health for everyone in Harris County.

With this in mind, I am excited to share with you the HCPH Strategic Plan for 2023-2027. This plan is rooted in our values of service and excellence, collaboration, inclusion, accountability, and public trust – all of which provide the foundation for how we do our work and achieve our goals.

This Strategic Plan equips HCPH with the tools necessary to accelerate our efforts to strengthen our core functions, as well as adapt and respond to the needs of Harris County.

The plan also includes a blueprint of the Department's four Strategic Priorities – where we will go and how we will achieve our goals and objectives over the next five years. These priorities aim to support Health Equity, Health Protection, Health Promotion, and Operational Excellence and seeks to achieve the goal of building healthier, safer, and more vibrant communities where people live, work, worship, and play.

Working together and with our communities and partners, we will continue to innovate, adapt, and refine our practices and programs to best serve the needs of all people in Harris County.

Thank you,

Barbie Robinson

Barbie L. Robinson
Executive Director

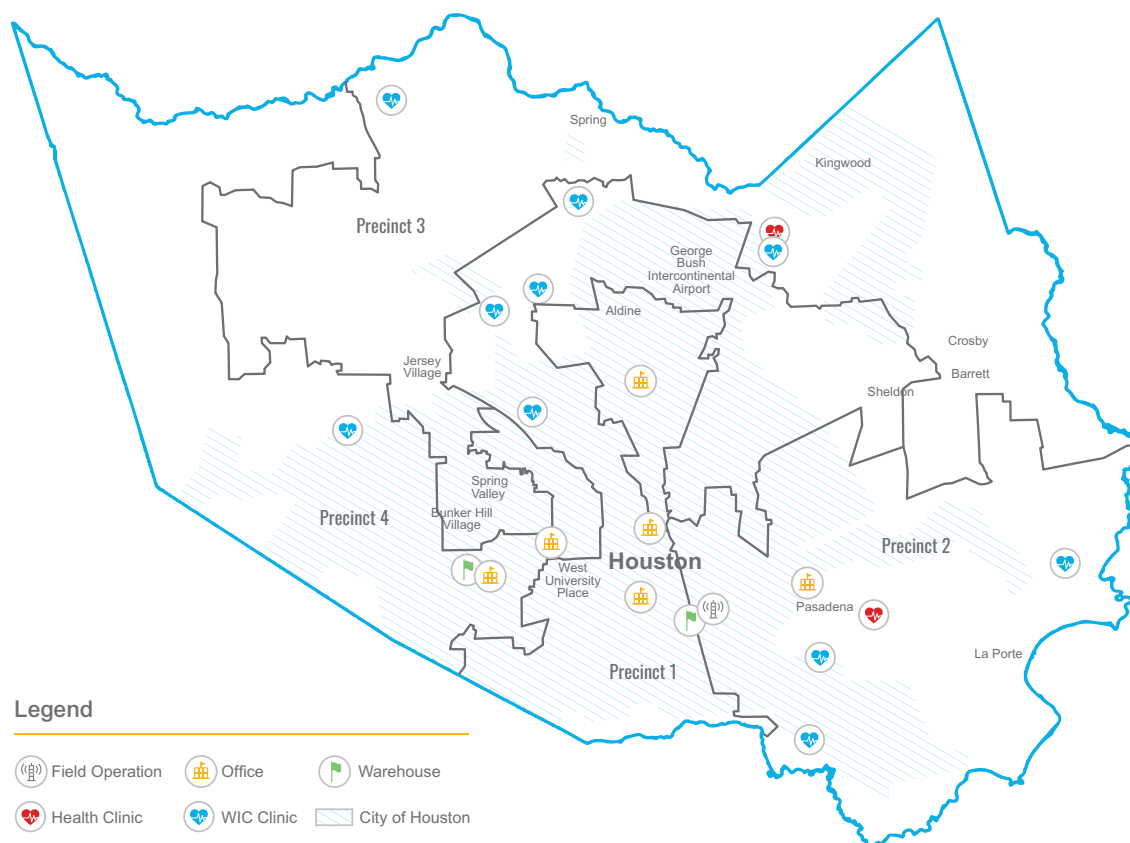
Harris County Public Health

ABOUT HARRIS COUNTY PUBLIC HEALTH

The Harris County Commissioners Court governs HCPH. It comprises elected officials who serve each of Harris County's four Precincts and an elected County Judge who represents the entire County.

The Commissioners Court oversees the County's budget and appropriates funding for all departments.

HCPH has been accredited by the Public Health Accreditation Board (PHAB) in 2018. PHAB aims to advance and transform public health practice by advocating performance improvement, strong infrastructure, and innovation. The PHAB accreditation process assesses and recognizes health departments that meet or exceed national best practices. As an accredited health department, HCPH has met or exceeded the requirements in the foundational public health services. HCPH is seeking re-accreditation in 2023.



*Data Source: Harris County Public Health, ArcGIS Server

STRATEGIC PLAN

The mission statement defines why the health department exists or its purpose through its collective services, resources, and programs.

MISSION

To protect health, prevent disease and injury, and promote well-being for everyone in Harris County by advancing equity, building partnerships, and establishing culturally responsive systems.

The vision statement reflects the ideal future state of the health department (i.e., what the health department hopes to achieve).

VISION

A Harris County in which all people can achieve their full potential for health and well-being.



Values describe how work is done and what beliefs are held in common as a basis for that work.

VALUES

Harris County Public Health embraces a foundation of transformational work anchored by the department's cornerstone values guiding our work to improve the community's health and well-being.

LEADERSHIP

We are advocates and strategists for the health of individuals and our communities.

SERVICE AND EXCELLENCE

We strive to create a culture of learning, innovation, and data-driven practices to guide our internal operations, improve performance, and build staff expertise.

QUALITY

We utilize state-of-the-art science, evidence-based best practices, and performance monitoring to maintain and improve program efficiency and efficacy.

COLLABORATION

We engage and work collaboratively with partners, communities, and staff to maximize our impact in Harris County.

COMMUNICATION

We provide the community with up-to-date and science-based health information.

INCLUSION AND BELONGING

We honor and embrace a diverse workforce. We create a culture in which employees feel valued, trusted, and comfortable being their authentic selves.

ACCOUNTABILITY, INTEGRITY, AND STEWARDSHIP

We act with integrity and assure public trust through transparency and demonstrating continuous improvement.

PROFESSIONALISM

We, as public servants, and team members, perform and model the highest levels of ethics, acumen, and responsiveness.

COMPASSION

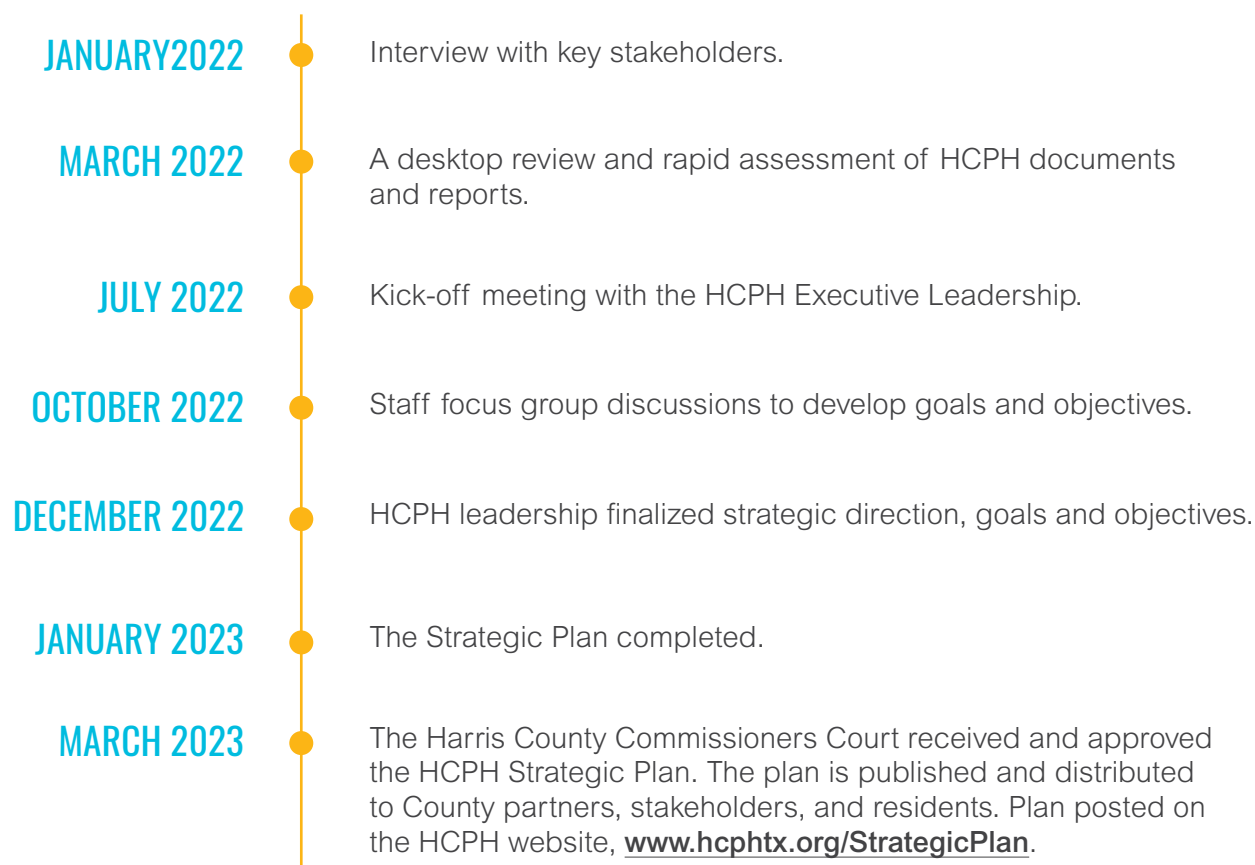
We treat each other and those we serve with dignity, respect, kindness, and empathy.

PLANNING PROCESS

Putting together the HCPH Strategic Plan took several actions, including:

- A review of past plans
- An internal assessment of current programs and activities
- Engagement with key community partners and stakeholders
- Comparisons of HCPH to other large local public health departments
- Discussions with HCPH leadership, management, and front-line staff

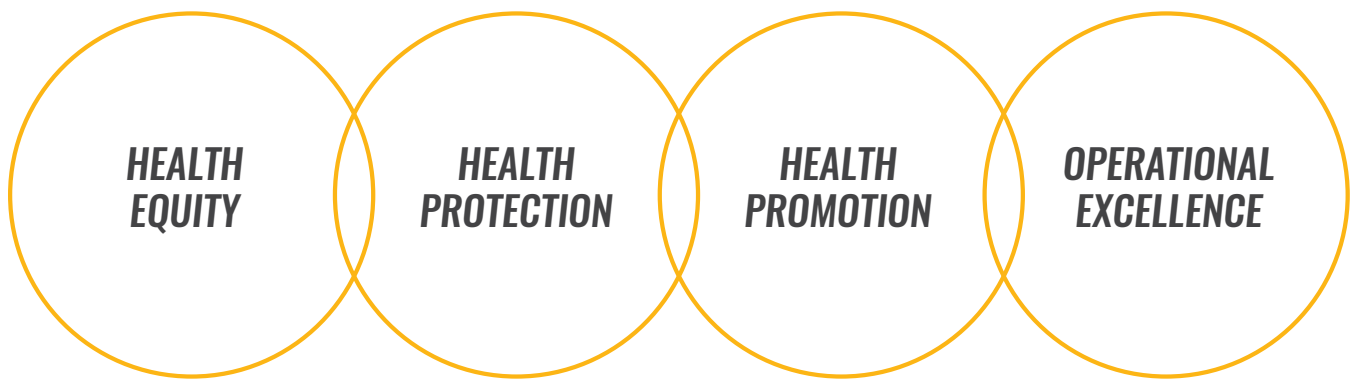
Through meaningful discussions with staff, executive leadership and partners, key themes emerged, driving the contents and direction of this plan. The following is a timeline of planning activities:



HCPH STRATEGIC DIRECTIONS

Strategic directions guide departmental activities, resource allocation, and partner alignment. HCPH has identified the following **four strategic directions** to be essential in advancing health and well-being in Harris County.

Progress in these areas will help HCPH achieve its Vision by assuring health equity, responding to promoting public health, and improving internal operations.



1 STRATEGIC DIRECTION HEALTH EQUITY

Achieving health equity means everyone in our community can reach an optimal state of health. Health equity factors include economic and educational opportunities, safe and healthy communities, access to quality housing, food security, and other social supports.

“HCPH will advance equity by identifying and mitigating disparities impacting individual and community health.”

HEALTH EQUITY GOALS AND OBJECTIVES

GOAL 1.1

Ensure equity is incorporated in the design and implementation of HCPH programs and services.

Objective 1.1.1: Develop and implement an agency-wide equity framework governing the initiation, design, and implementation of programming.

Objective 1.1.2: Ensure necessary system-wide data is collected to inform health equity efforts.

GOAL 1.2

Expand access and awareness to HCPH and social safety net services through partnerships and collaboration across sectors and systems to impact the social determinants of health.

Objective 1.2.1: Strengthen strategic partnerships and alliances with culturally specific grassroots and Community-Based Organizations (CBOs) to inform, promote, and support health equity initiatives in alignment with the Community Health Assessment and Community Health Improvement Plan.

Objective 1.2.2: Develop and implement a survey and focus group framework to receive feedback from community residents and partners to support the development and evaluation of HCPH programs.

GOAL 1.3

Incorporate inclusion, cultural humility, and address the impact of bias across HCPH to better reflect and serve Harris County's cultural and linguistic needs.

Objective 1.3.1: Formalize staff recruitment, onboarding, professional development, and retention initiatives to strengthen the HCPH workforce, incorporating the principles of equity, inclusion, and cultural humility.

Objective 1.3.2: Integrate diversity, equity, inclusion, and implicit bias knowledge development as part of the standard training program for HCPH staff and contractors

Objective 1.3.3: Integrate meaningful equity considerations into internal messaging and decision-making as an integral part of organizational culture

Objective 1.3.4: Develop and implement a plan to eliminate the identified language and cultural gaps across HCPH program and service delivery.

2

STRATEGIC DIRECTION HEALTH PROTECTION

Harris County often faces a variety of environmental and health threats, from climate change to disease outbreaks, like the COVID-19 pandemic and mpox. These challenges make it critical to prepare for, identify, respond to, and recover from events threatening public health. This important work requires HCPH to maintain constant attention to emerging threats. HCPH must also build proactive and meaningful partnerships with the community and local organizations.

“HCPH is committed to insuring health protection by preparing for and responding to public health threats and strengthening the community’s resiliency against those threats.”

HEALTH PROTECTION GOALS AND OBJECTIVES

GOAL 2.1

Improve HCPH effectiveness in preventing, controlling, and responding to existing and emerging public health threats locally, nationally, and globally.

Objective 2.1.1: Strengthen capabilities to identify and detect emerging public health threats through internal and external data sharing.

Objective 2.1.2: Strengthen capabilities to respond to emerging public health threats.

Objective 2.1.3: Strengthen HCPH capabilities to serve as subject matter experts (SMEs) to guide existing and emerging public health threats.

Objective 2.1.4: Develop a plan with policies and procedures in response to public health threats that don’t require an ICS structure.

**GOAL
2.2**

Strengthen communities' capabilities to avoid, prepare, respond, and recover from emergencies.

Objective 2.2.1: Work with diverse community organizations to identify gaps in knowledge and resources to improve community disaster resilience.

Objective 2.2.2: Strengthen capabilities of community residents to build capacity and knowledge to prepare and respond to public health emergencies.

Objective 2.2.3: Improve HCPH capabilities to support communities with preparedness and response resources (e.g., social media and outreach communications) that are culturally responsive and representative of Harris County residents.

**GOAL
2.3**

Establish and leverage existing partnerships to improve response to threats involving multiple agencies.

Objective 2.3.1: Identify new partners and strengthen existing partnerships through collaboration and resource sharing to address public health emergencies and threats.

Objective 2.3.2: Improve coordination and training with inter-governmental and community partnerships to mitigate incidents and crises.

3

**STRATEGIC DIRECTION HEALTH
PROMOTION**

Health promotion is a process that enables people to increase control over their health and well-being. Public health agencies do this by addressing the physiological, social, and environmental determinants of health. HCPH views the following factors as crucial to improving the health status of Harris County residents:

- Improving economic security and opportunities
- Improving access to health and social services
- Advocating for residents and community partners to actively engage in their individual and community health and well-being

“HCPH promotes and provides services that support optimal health, self-sufficiency, and well-being at the individual and community levels.”

HEALTH PROMOTION GOALS AND OBJECTIVES

GOAL 3.1

Be recognized as a trusted resource and authority for science-based health information, services, and resources.

Objective 3.1.1: Connect residents with social safety net organizations to address social determinants of health.

Objective 3.1.2: Strengthen HCPH's role as a source of health and wellness information and enhance community trust.

Objective 3.1.3: Increase the number of participating agencies to expand interlinked referral networks with health care, social, and human service organizations providing holistic or educational services.

GOAL 3.2

Address the burden of disease and promote healthy behaviors and communities based on the leading causes of death report.

Objective 3.2.1: Develop a multi-stakeholder approach to reduce access to and usage of tobacco products.

Objective 3.2.2: Develop a multi-stakeholder approach to prevent and reduce diabetes onset.

Objective 3.2.3: Develop a multi-stakeholder approach to reduce the burden of obesity.

Objective 3.2.4: Develop a multi-stakeholder approach to reduce maternal and infant mortality and promote healthy starts for babies.

GOAL 3.3

Strengthen the presence of HCPH by informing the community and policymakers of opportunities to improve the health of Harris County residents and counteract misinformation harmful to residents.

Objective 3.3.1: Develop and implement a framework for reporting on the indicators of health for Harris County.

Objective 3.3.2: Assure cultural competency in communication campaigns informing county residents about HCPH's services and increase visibility, focusing on prioritizing traditionally underserved communities.

Objective 3.3.3: Increase HCPH-sponsored community events (i.e., town halls, speaking engagements, in-person tabling) and engagement efforts to build and maintain a trusted presence.

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STRATEGIC DIRECTION OPERATIONAL EXCELLENCE

Public Health departments must establish and maintain strong foundational instruction of internal operations and processes to make the greatest impact. HCPH is committed to demonstrating improved organizational performance and effectiveness, attain health equity, public health protection and health promotion.

“HCPH will achieve operational excellence by driving integrity and resource efficiency, monitoring program and service effectiveness, and strengthening interagency relationships in areas of shared importance.”

OPERATIONAL EXCELLENCE GOALS AND OBJECTIVES

GOAL 4.1

Foster a culture of ethics, integrity, and stewardship across HCPH.

Objective 4.1.1: Reform internal budgeting and financial management practices to maximize current programmatic funding and the impact of available revenue sources.

Objective 4.1.2: Develop an organization-wide action plan to ensure compliance with Fraud, Waste and Abuse requirements that hold accountable HCPH Offices and Divisions, employees, and affiliated parties.

Objective 4.1.3: Ensure all HCPH staff are receiving the identified required trainings by public health standards of best practices and by local, state, and federal requirements with ongoing auditing and monitoring processes.

Objective 4.1.4: Establish a plan to evaluate the strategic alignment of grants, including identifying and planning for impacts on staffing and resources.

Objective 4.1.5: Develop and implement a collaborative program-based budgeting methodology that will increase engagement during the budget development process.

Objective 4.1.6: Ensure mandatory yearly individual performance reviews.

Objective 4.1.7: Develop compliant data systems and ensure data exchange with partners in accordance with security, privacy, and ethical standards.

GOAL
4.2

Improve collaboration, planning, and performance across service areas and programs.

Objective 4.2.1: Increase effective communication and collaboration with health and other systems to improve public health coordination and outcomes.

Objective 4.2.2: Provide internal peer learning opportunities that increase inter- and cross-departmental knowledge of roles and responsibilities for all staff.

Objective 4.2.3: Develop a comprehensive framework defining performance management, quality improvement, and Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) for HCPH.

Objective 4.2.4: Develop a standardized community partnership tracking system to track engagements with external partners.

Objective 4.2.5: Establish systems and structures to ensure the retention and documentation of departmental operational knowledge

Objective 4.2.6: Establish staff communities of practice that enhance organizational goals and employee development and incorporate industry best practices.

Objective 4.2.7: Streamline workforce and process efficiency by implementing lean administrative practices to achieve higher operational excellence.

GOAL
4.3

Invest in workforce development.

Objective 4.3.1: Develop and implement a plan to strengthen talent acquisition, employee engagement, performance management, retention, and employee development strategies.

Objective 4.3.2: Increase staff engagement opportunities to foster community and collegiality.

Objective 4.3.3: Establish an internal training program for all employees.

Objective 4.3.4: Develop and implement activities to address and prioritize staff's physical and emotional wellness, especially those tailored for front-line staff.

“HCPH is committed to ensuring that our community has equitable access to services, supports, and policies that promote health.”

MEASURING IMPACT: IMPLEMENTING THE PLAN

Progress toward HCPH’s four strategic directions requires active measurement and is guided by the Implementation Plan. The Implementation Plan shows the roles and responsibilities, due dates, and performance measures tied to each objective outlined in the Strategic Plan.

Using the Implementation Plan, HCPH will evaluate progress quarterly and report progress annually to the public. These activities build accountability for the department’s progress toward the strategic directions by keeping the community and critical stakeholders informed along the way.

KEY DEFINITIONS

The following terms used within this Strategic Plan document are defined below for understanding.

Term	Definition
Role Definitions	
Lead Role	The lead role is ultimately responsible and accountable for the objective and actions to support the objective. This role may facilitate or convene other divisions and offices to support this goal, but the ownership of the objective and supporting actions resides with the lead division or office.
Support Role	The support role is considered an enabling component to completing objectives and will play an active role in activities, tasks, or projects that lead us toward completing the objective.
Consulted Role	The consulted role may be a subject matter expert in the objective but does not typically hold responsibility for deliverables. Instead, the consulted role contributes to objectives by offering strategic guidance and feedback to the lead and supporting roles.
Informed Role	The informed role is any stakeholder that must be kept informed of the progress, results, and risks impacting the objectives. This role does not create deliverables or provide information but instead consumes the information to help drive decisions.

Strategic Plan Definitions	
Strategic Direction	Broad terms that categorize key mission-related goals and objectives.
Goal	A broad statement about the long-term expectation of what should happen (the desired result). It serves as the foundation for developing objectives.
Objective	A statement describing the result to be achieved under a specific goal and how it will be achieved. Multiple objectives usually address a single goal.

Glossary of Terms	
Health Equity	An environment where everyone has the opportunity to access the resources they need to support health and well-being, regardless of one's circumstances.
Health Protection	The protection of individuals, groups, and populations through expert knowledge and effective collaboration to prevent and mitigate the impact of public health threats.
Health Promotion	The process of enabling individuals to increase control over and improve their health and well-being through the sharing of knowledge and information.
Operational Excellence	A workplace culture that embraces the principles of performance management and the continuous cycle of quality improvement to maximize efficiency and the use of resources.
Partnership	An alliance of two or more organizations sharing a common focus that combines resources to implement a range of activities through their respective organizations.
Community-Based Organization	A public or not-for-profit organization working at the local level to provide services to a targeted population within a region.
Public Health Threats	Occurrences whose presence jeopardizes public health under any of the five foundational areas of public health. These areas include chronic disease and injury prevention; infectious disease control; environmental public health; maternal, child, and family health; and access to and linkage with clinical care.
Cultural Competence	Specific standards, policies, practices, and attitudes used in appropriate cultural settings to increase the quality and presence of services.
Social Determinants of Health	The six conditions in which people live, learn, work, play, and worship affect various health risks and outcomes. This includes social and community context, healthcare access and use, neighborhood and physical environment, workplace conditions, education, and income and wealth gaps.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

HCPH acknowledges the following stakeholders who contributed significantly to the strategic planning process.

Stakeholders

Harris County Judge
Harris County Commissioners
Episcopal Health Foundation
Harris Health System
Office of County Administration

Consultant Partners

Health Management Associates



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